

The Maratha-Sikh Treaty of 1785

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With the return of the Emperor Shah Alam II to the protection of Mahadji Sindhia, it became necessary for him to protect the imperial capital and its neighbourhood and to repel the incursions of the Sikhs who were threatening them. With the Emperor's approbation, it was his intention to place His Majesty in the fort of Delhi and then to lead an expedition against them. But he could not leave the siege of Agra and Dig, into hands other than his own. He, therefore, entrusted the management of his affairs at Delhi to one of his lieutenants, Ambaji Ingle, and on 19 January 1785, got him appointed the *faujdar* of the twenty-eight *mahals* of Sonapat, bordering on the Sikh territories. At the time this part of the country was then in a disturbed state. Ambaji feared opposition from the Sikhs on the one hand and from the Rohelas of Ghausgarh on the other. But as Zabita Khan was not keeping good health, there was very little fear of disturbance from his side. Moreover, his eldest son Ghulam Qadir had for years been under the protection of Mahadji Sindhia himself and had been reconciled and sent back to his father. This had cemented their cordial relations. The death of Zabita Khan on 27 January 1785, however, left no cause of anxiety for the Maratha chief, because a *protégé* of Mahadji himself was now to succeed him and he could easily be brought to terms. It was the Sikhs alone whose presence in the neighbourhood of Delhi was a source of anxiety to Mahadji Sindhia. Ambaji's main mission, therefore, was to protect the capital from them and to contract a friendly alliance with their Sardars so as to remove all danger to the imperial territories from that quarter.

While conveying to Hastings at Calcutta the news of the death of Zabita Khan, Major James Browne wrote from Dig on 1 February 1785, 'it is probable that Scindia will support him (Ghulam Qadir) in

the succession on certain terms. At present the Seiks are likely to interfere, their Grand Camp (the *Dal Khalsaji*) being in that district, and this may produce hostilities between them and the Marathas.' It was feared that interference on the part of the Sikhs in the succession of Ghulam Qadir to the office of his father would cause a disturbance in the peaceful administration of the capital and its neighbourhood. Mahadji, therefore, could ill-afford to displease the Sikh Sardars. Anderson tells us in his letter, dated 1 February 1785, addressed to Warren Hastings, 'He has lately dismissed the Vakeels from the Seiks with presents to their Chiefs and I understand he has offered to take 5,000 of them into his service' (*Dept, Secret Consult*, 19 February 1785).

Mahadji could see that as long as the Sikhs were free to continue their incursions unopposed into the territories under his protection, he could not establish his own government successfully. Nor could he, without befriending the Sikhs, reduce the power of various Mughul *jagirdars* amongst whom a great part of the country had been parcelled out. He, therefore, wished to divert the attention of the Sikhs from his side. There was only one other side in this part of the country to which the Sikhs could be turned and that was that of the Nawab Vizir of Oudh (*Lieutenant James Anderson to the Hon'ble Macpherson, Governor-General*, 23 March 1785).

The first intelligence of the Nawab Vizir of Oudh apprehending 'a combination to be formed betwixt Scindia and the Seiks of a nature hostile to the Vizier' was forwarded from Fatehgarh on 4 February 1785, by Colonel Sir John Cumming to Major General Hibbert the commander-in-chief, on the authority of a letter from Major Palmer, the Resident at Lucknow. 'The Great Camp of the Seiks' had, 'passed the Ganges into the Vizier's country' in the second week of January and had plundered Chandausi on 3 Rabi-ul-awwal 1199 Hijri, 15 January 1785.¹

On the 12 Rabi-ul-awwal, 24 January, while the Sikh Sardars Baghel Singh, Jassa Singh Rangarhia, Gurdit Singh, Sawan Singh, Bhag Singh and others were encamped near Benampore and were waiting for Sardar Karam Singh Nirmala, letters were received from the army of Mahadji Sindhia. According to Major Browne's informant:

they left the army and went under the trees where they had consultation and read the letters. We hear from some of them that Baghel Singh had advised that the plunder should be left to the other side of

the Jumna and . . . ten or fifteen thousand horses, being crossed again over the river, should go plundering as far as Bareilly. (*Intel. of the Sikh Army*, 12 Rabi-ul-awwal, 1199; *Major Browne to Hastings*, 28 January 1785).

When the Sikh horsemen returned after examining the fords for crossing the river, Sardars Jassa Singh, Gurdit Singh and Baghel Singh held consultation and decided 'that they must with expedition cross the river and plunder some place. At this time the news arrived that Navab Zabita Khan was dead. Upon hearing this, Baghel Singh said that it was proper to cross the river towards Ghousghurra (Ghausgarh).'

On the 20 Rabi-ul-awwal 1199, 1 February 1785, while the Sikh Army was encamped four *kos* to the west of the river opposite to the 'Sebulghurrah' *ghat*, fourteen *kos* from Sitabad, Ambaji arrived with letters from Rao Partap Singh of Macheri and from Raju Mall, the *vakil* of Baghel Singh in Mahadji's Camp.

The following is the substance of Rao Pratap Singh's letter:

The expulsion of the Turks will be easily effected, and it is a business in which your religion is concerned. If you are desirous of joining in the attempt, give immediate information, so that, having settled the matter with Scindia, I may send the necessaries. Many particulars will be told [to] you by Hurjee Ambazee which you will consider as true. I am going to Appajee to the neighbourhood of Delhi. Where you may appoint, I will have an interview. Scindia is turning his thoughts to the conquest of new countries.

And the *vakil* of Baghel Singh wrote to his master:

Having settled all negotiations with Scindia in the firmest manner, I have received my dismissal and am coming with Apajee. As soon as the army arrives in the neighbourhood of Delhi, I shall quit it and being soon arrived at your presence will inform you of Scindia's designs. (*Intell. of the Sikh Army*, 21 Rabi-ul-awwal 1199, 2 February 1785; *Major Browne to Warren Hastings*, dated Dig, 9 February 1785)

On the following day, 2 February 1785, news arrived that Sardar Karam Singh Dulcha Singh, Sardar Rai Singh and other Sikh chiefs had arrived from the neighbourhood of Ghausgarh and were encamped four or five *kos* from the Khalsa Army. Immediately Baghel

Singh went for an interview with Sardar Karam Singh Nirmala and 'shewed him the letters of Scindia and Raja Himmatt Behadur, and the *arzee* of Raju Mall Vakeel and the letter of Row Pertaub Singh of Machree addressed to him and informed him of Hurzee Ambazie's arrival and negociation' (*James Browne to Hastings*, 9 February 1785, *with enclosures*).

'Having written an answer to the letter of Rao Pertaub Singh, they sent off Hurjee Ambajee' on the 5 February. The answer mentioned 'that they will first have an interview with him, and, then, agreeable to what he may advise, join him with the greatest pleasure.'

On Sunday 6 February 1785, the camp of the *dal Khalsaji*, or the Grand Army of the Sikhs, moved to the neighbourhood of Daryapur, about two *kos* from the *ghat* of Maheshgarh. Hearing of the projected invasion of his territories by the Sikhs and finding himself incapable of opposing the invincible *dal*, Ghulam Qadir Khan deputed Haji Hussain Khan to wait upon the Sikh Sardars Jassa Singh and others, offering to pay the usual tribute for *raakhi* (protection) and *karah prasad* and requesting them 'to remove their Army from his country and not to ruin the villages' (*Intelligence of the Sikh Army*, 26 Rabi-ul-awwal, 1199, 7 February 1785).

This surrender of Ghulam Qadir Khan added to the anxieties of Mahadji Sindhia and caused him alarm about the fate of the imperial capital and the neighbouring territories at the hands of the Sikhs. He was further alarmed at the movements of the British troops under the command of Colonel Sir John Cumming who had, in fact, marched out of Fatehgarh to defend the Nawab Vizir's territories from the incursion of the Khalsa *dal*. Negotiations were, therefore, started with the Colonel with a view to ascertaining the intentions of the Company's government and to assure him of his own goodwill towards them.

Upon the arrival of Colonel Sir John Cumming at Anupshahr, a Maratha *vakil*, says the Colonel in his despatch, dated 27 February waited on him with a letter from Malhar Babu, 'a person of great trust and confidence with Sindhia and who rents all the districts situated betwixt Delhi and this part of His Excellency the Vizier's dominions'. The letter assured him, as did the *vakil* verbally, that the Marathas had ordered all their officials to afford every possible assistance in point of supplies to the British troops, whether encamped on their frontiers or passing through any part of their districts. 'Understanding that the

march of the troops from Futtygurrh has alarmed Sindhia and the Maharatta Government', Sir John continues,

I have judged it necessary, both in my letter to Malhar Baboo and in my conversation with his Vakeel, to give the strongest assurances of the friendship and attachment of our Government towards the Mahrattas. I have begged him to inform Sindhia that the sole object of the march of this detachment was the defence of the Vizier's frontiers from the incursions of the Seiks. And I have added that should the Seiks come down in such force that the Mahratta troops on this frontier should be unable to repell them, I am ready to assist them against the Seiks as a proof of the friendship of our Government towards the Pateal. . . .

provided the Marathas on their own part also

would give a proof of the sincerity of their friendship towards us by attacking some bodies of the Seiks that had lately made an incursion into Rohilcund and now hovered on our frontier. And I concluded with assuring them that whenever the Seiks should be compelled to return to their own country, and we should be satisfied that no further danger was to be apprehended from these plunders, I should return to Futtyghurr with the troops I brought with me from thence.² (*Secret Consult*, 22, 1785; *John Cumming to John Macpherson*, 27 March 1785; *Secret Consult*, 12 April 1785)

This stroke of Cumming's diplomacy succeeded in bringing about a rupture between the Marathas and the Sikhs and the two came to grips in the neighbourhood of Panipat. To prove to the satisfaction of Cumming the sincerity of their friendship for Company's government, the troops under Ambaji and Malhar Babu attacked a body of about 500 Sikhs, killed 200 of them and took 70 horses. This unwarranted attack on the part of the Marathas under Malhar Babu and Ambaji, while their master Mahadji Sindhia was making overtures for a friendly alliance through Rao Partap Singh of Macheri and Raju Mall, *vakil* of Sardar Baghel Singh, caused great resentment amongst the Sikh Sardars. They retired beyond Panipat to their own frontier and drew together a force of 20,000 cavalry, a body of infantry and a few guns. They then attacked the town of Panipat, plundered and burnt it and cut off an entire battalion of sepoys that were in garrison there.

This battalion was one of those formerly commanded by Sumro, and now in the service of Sindhia.

While conveying this intelligence to the Hon'ble John Macpherson, Sir John Cumming wrote from Anupshahr on 27 March 1785,

I have also information of their having cut off another battalion, but the Maratha Vakeels not admitting the truth of this last intelligence, I do not give it as altogether certain. I consider it a point of utmost consequence to engage these two powers in hostility and no endeavours have been wanting on my part to effect it.

'By engaging Ambajee and Mulhai Baboo in hostilities with the Seikhs', he wrote two days later, 'I am happy to observe that I have chalked out sufficient employment for their forces at present.' (*Colonel Cumming to Major General Hibbert*, 18 March 1785, *Secret Consult*, 9 April 1785; *Cumming to Macpherson*, 27 March 1785, *Secret Consult*, 12 April 1785; *Cumming to Macpherson*, 29 March 1785.)

The Sikhs had now lost all faith in the sincerity of Mahadji's negotiations for a friendly alliance. They needed no further proof of his hostility towards them, as it had been already expressed through the behaviour of his lieutenants. They also perhaps saw in this behaviour the hidden intentions of Mahadji to the possession of some of the Sikh territories, as he himself confessed later to Lieutenant Anderson on the 13 April, as one of the objects of the Treaty of 31 March. To safeguard their interests, therefore, they chose to ally themselves with the East India Company and opened friendly negotiations with them.

Having been assured of the friendly intentions of the Company through the messages of Sir John Cumming sent in the last week of February, Mahadji turned his attention to the Sikhs and the Mughul officials and *jagirdars* at the capital.³ So far his measures in this quarter had involved additional expenses without any substantial advantage in return. He found that Mirza Najjaf Khan, the *Wazir-ul-Mumalik* at Delhi and his successors had parcelled out a great part of the country in *jagirs* amongst their friends and followers. He could not, therefore, derive any benefit from his position there without their resumption. But it was not an easy task and could not be hastily implemented. His impoverished finances, however, left him with no other alternative. In preparation for more general measure, he began, 'to take possession of

jagheers of the princes, with a promise to pay them an equivalent in money. But the step was so violently resented by the King that Scindia was forced to recede from it.' 'In the meantime the Mughul Chiefs', according to Anderson's despatch of 23 March from Sindhia's camp near Agra, 'have had sufficient cause of alarm on this head, and it was suspected that some of the principal amongst them have entered into a secret confederacy with the Seiks for an eventual junction with them in case of the resumption of their jagheers.'

The surrender of Ghulam Qadir to the Sikhs and the detachment of several of the Mughul chiefs for an alliance with them hastened the plans of Mahadji for a speedy reconciliation with the Sikh Sardars.

Ambaji had by now had the experience of an armed conflict with them and of the heavy loss that their retaliation had inflicted upon him in cutting off a battalion of sepoys at Panipat. Cumming told Anderson on 31 March, that 'they think of nothing but the Seiks. The Seiks have again crossed the Jumna and Ambajee and Mulhar are not able to look them in face, which they at last from necessity confessed to me'. (*Secret Consult*, 12 April 1785.)

Fearful of the continued retaliation from the Sikhs and further humiliation at their hands that might bring him to disgrace in the eyes of his master, Ambaji actively busied himself in the last week of March 1785, to effect a reconciliation with them and sought the mediation of Maharao Pratap Singh of Macheri to bring it to a successful conclusion. Pratap Singh, as we know, had already been in correspondence with the Sikhs and had invited them to join hands with Mahadji Sindhia for 'the expulsion of the Turks' and 'the conquest of new countries' from the Nawab Vizir of Oudh, the Mughul chiefs of Delhi and the rajas of Jaipur and Marwar. Rao Partap Singh and Ambaji marched northwards and held consultations with the Sikh Sardars at Bakhtawarpur, 13 miles north of Delhi, from 27 to the 31 March and the following Treaty was concluded between Ambaji and the Sikh Sardars:

Copy of the Treaty concluded between Raja Ambaji Ingle and the Chiefs of the Sikhs, 31 March 1785:

Between this party (Raja Ambaji) and the Chiefs Bughel Singh Bahadur, Kurrum Sing Bahadur, Dooljah Sing, Bhaak Sing, Dewan Sing, Baak Sing Dilowalah, Gohir Sing and the other Chiefs of the *Khalsajee* (the Seik Government) in friendship with the above mentioned Chiefs, an unity of interests and Friendship has been

established on oath, through the intervention of Maha Row Purtab Sing Bahadur.

The friends and enemies and the prosperity and adversity of each are mutual. Not the smallest degree of jealousy or difference subsists between us; and God is witness that there shall be no deviation.

The Seik Government from a consideration of the firm friendship that is established agree to forego their exactions of *raakee*, and this party from the share he now takes in their interest agrees to go himself in person or depute some other to his master the Maha Rajah (Sindia) in order to promote the settlement of the objects of the Seik Chiefs in regard to a provision for their expenses, & c., and whatever may be settled by the Maha Rajah shall be duly performed.

Of whatever either on this side or that side of the Jumna, independent of the Royal Territories, may be taken in concert with each other from the Hindoos and Mussalmans, one third shall be given to the Seik Chiefs together with other points settled for them.

Marching and halting and other points, great and small, shall be settled with the mutual consent of the parties.

The contracting parties shall unite their Forces to repress any disturbances that may be excited by their enemies.

Written on the 19 Jummadi awal, of the 28 year of the Reign, corresponding with the 31 day of March AD 1785.

A true translation from the copy given to me by Mahajee Sindia.

James Anderson,
Resident with Mahajee Sindhia.
(*For Dept. Secret Consult*, 3 May 1785)

On the conclusion of the Treaty, Ambajee sent it on to Mahadji Sindhia for his approbation. Mahadji desired him to come up personally to his camp and he arrived there on the night of 10 April 1785 [*Major Palmer to the Governor-General, and James Anderson to the Same*, both dated 11 April 1785; *For Dept. Secret Consult*, 26 April 1785].

In the meantime Lieutenant James Anderson, the Resident with Mahadji Sindhia, Colonel Sir John Cumming, the officer commanding the detachment of the Company's troops on the frontier, and Major Palmer, the Resident at Lucknow, had been reporting to the

government at Calcutta the news and their views regarding the treaty. They saw in its materialization a danger to the political interests of the East India Company and to the territories of their friend, the Nawab Vizir of Oudh. Therefore, they directed all their efforts towards its nullification by whatever means possible.

Lieutenant James Anderson waited on Mahadji Sindhia on Wednesday, the 13 April, to have 'some satisfactory explanations in regard to his late negotiations with the Seiks'. 'He immediately acquiesced', wrote to Anderson the next day,

and having caused the original treaty to be produced and read, he proceeded to make some remarks upon it. The first article, he observed, wherein the friends and enemies of each are specified to be mutual, ought to be considered by us as a full refutation of any insidious reports, that might have spread, of its evil tendency towards us. As to the other articles, he said, he had two objects in view from them; the one was by aiding the party of the Seiks with whom he had formed the treaty, against their enemies in the state, to possess himself, in virtue of their agreement of partition, of a great part of their country; and the second was to avail himself of their assistance in the reduction of the Jeypore and Marwar Rajahs, who had of late withheld their tribute from him . . . I mentioned to him, however, that the specified of the Hindoos and Mussulmans on this and that side of the Jumna might be liable to wrong interpretations, and that I thought it would be better if stated in absolute and irrelative manner. . . .

He added that as he was answerable for the peaceable behaviour of the Seiks towards the Vizier as the ally of his friends the English, so he expected that we should be answerable for the conduct of the Vizier towards him. . . .

Mahajee made uncommon solicitude to vindicate himself against the insidious reports which had been propagated against him, and to assert the warmth of his friendship for the English. Possibly his fears, excited by the conduct of Colonel Cumming, may have had some effect over him on this occasion

These two [objects of the treaty as given out by Mahadji] are strongly supported by probability, for the Rajahs of Jaypore and Marwar have both of them for many years past shewed an open contempt for his authority, and his resentment against the former

has been heightened by his violation of all the terms of agreement into which he had entered with him last December, and of which the exigency of Sindhia's affairs at that time prevented his enforcing the performance. Besides a report, and seemingly well founded, has of late prevailed that these Rajahs, from their apprehension of Sindia's enmity, have, with a view to defeat the effects of it, been endeavouring to contract an alliance with the Seiks, and to counteract this scheme must have been a very prevalent motive with Sindia for hastening his treaty with them. In regard to his aiding the extensive divisions of the Seiks, however extravagant it may appear, it must be allowed to suit admirably with the crafty policy, by which he has hitherto pursued his objects here. The prosecution of a plan of this nature is at all events much more probable than that of his joining with them in open opposition to us (*James Anderson to Macpherson*, 14 April 1785; *Secret Consult*, 3 May, 1785).

On another occasion it was suggested to Sindhia by Lieutenant Anderson to include in the Sikh Treaty the English and the Vizir as his friends and allies and instead of specifying the conquests to be made on this and that side of the Yamuna, it should be absolutely expressed 'whatever new conquests might be made' (*Anderson to Macpherson*, 28 April 1785; *Secret Consult*, 12 May 1785).

A few days later Sardar Dulcha Singh also arrived in the camp of Mahadji Sindhia to settle personally the various other points with him on behalf of the Sikh Sardars. But he was surprised to find the deceit practised upon them by Mahadji. 'His original proposals communicated to them verbally by Ambajee were that on relinquishing their demand of *Raakee*', he would confer on them a *jagir* of 10 lakhs annually, and that whatever countries they might jointly conquer should be divided in a certain proportion between them (one third being the share of the Sikhs). In place of these terms he now amended that they should relinquish their *raakee*; that they should unite their forces with him for the conquest of the territories of those Seik chiefs with whom they were at variance; that as he did not mean to take any share of the conquests himself, they should consider his cession of the whole as an equivalent for the *jagir*; and that instead of general conquests (with particular reference to Aligarh) that he had proposed to them, he had now expressly excluded them from the territories of the Vizier and the Company, with whom he was in strict friendship. But

Sardar Dulcha Singh was not prepared to agree on these amended terms. Mahadji, therefore, detained him in his camp till the signatures of the other Sardars had been subscribed to the new definitive treaty (*Anderson to Macpherson*, 10 May 1785; *Secret Consult*, 26 May 1785).

The following is the text of the Definitive Treaty of 10 May 1785:

The Definitive Treaty of 10 May 1785

The Chiefs of the Khalsa with a force of 5,000 horse being united in connection with the forces with the victorious army shall receive allowances and a *jaghier* of 10 lacs of rupees according to the following particulars.

Of this *Jaghire* 7½ lacs of rupees are in the neighbourhood of Karnal and 2½ from the country of the Sircar, and they shall attend in union, and besides their allowances and *Jaghire*, the Sircar shall have authority over the whole dependency of Karnal and the country without interference. And if in the authority of the dependency, the authority (? income) should be less than this engagement, some thing shall instead therefore be granted from the Sircar. In case the army of the said chiefs should be summoned to the Sircar before they have authority and possession in the *Jaghire*, half a rupee shall be paid from the Sircar for each horseman after they be recorded. And after possession and full authority, no claim of pay for the sepoys shall be attended to. For supporting themselves on the *Jaghire* and considering their union to be finer than a hair, let them employ themselves in the obedience to orders and let them prevent their people from taking the *Raakee* in the circuit of the royal place and in the possessions of the Sircar, and by no means let any disagreement remain in future.

I am in friendship with the Chiefs of the English Company and with the Nawab Vizier, let there never be any injury offered to their country.

In this agreement God is between us, so no deviation shall ever happen.

Written the 29 Jumadie-as-Sani at Muttrajee.

A True Copy
Sd James Anderson

During his detention in the camp of Mahadji Sindhia, Sardar Dulcha Singh from necessity agreed to the terms of the treaty, but he

was irritated at the unfriendly treatment that he received at his hands and at the tone of superiority that had been assumed towards him. He, therefore, sent a *vakil* in the garb of a merchant to Lieutenant James Anderson, the Company's Resident in the camp. The *vakil* saw Anderson's *maulvi*, the confidential clerk, on 9 May, and

complained bitterly of the deceit which had been practised upon them by Sindhia. . . . Duljah Singh, he said, being at present in the power of Sindhia had from necessity yielded to these terms, but he declared that as they had discovered clearly the insidious scope of Sindhia's designs, they were determined not to adhere to the Treaty. And as Sindhia had insinuated that in case of their disagreement, the English would join with him against them, he wished to know what

the real intentions of the English 'were in such an event. He concluded by observing that if the English were desirous of a connection with them, he would immediately procure letters . . . with the offers of friendship from several their Chiefs' for the Resident.

As in the opinion of Lieutenant Anderson, agreeable to the views of his masters, it was 'more favourable to the interests of the Company that they should continue to be disunited', he directed his *maulvi* to inform the Sikh *vakil*, 'that the Seik Chiefs may rest perfectly assured that it is not our intention to take any part with him [Sindhia] against them'. He regarded the intercourse of friendship by letters between the Sikh Sardars and the Company's government 'extremely proper', but as his residence in Sindhia's camp rendered it impolitic to become the channel of this correspondence, he suggested 'that it should be managed through Major Palmer', the Resident at Lucknow (Lieutenant Anderson to Macpherson, 10 May 1785; *Secret Consult*, 26 May 1785).

The other Sikh Sardars, on hearing of the treatment meted out to their ambassador Sardar Dulcha Singh in the form of his forcible detention in the Sindhia's camp, were also disconcerted and they decided to break away from Mahadji, as no reliance could any longer be placed on his promises.

They renewed their negotiations with Colonel Sir John Cumming, the officer commanding the Company's detachment on the Vizir's frontier. The letters Sardars Gurdit Singh and Baghel Singh forwarded to the Governor-General on 4 May 1785, exposed to him the anti-English tendencies of Sindhia and his offer of a share of 6

annas in a rupee from the territories of the Company (evidently those of the Vizir under their protection) that might fall into their joint possession. The Sardars offered to have an alliance with the Company if the Company wished, and said, 'if you will make friendship and alliance with the Chiefs of the Khalsa, know us also on our parts to be inclined to your friendship' (*For Dept. Secret Consult*, 26 May 1785).

In the meantime Sir John Cumming had received the views of the government at Calcutta for his guidance with regards to the negotiations with Sikh Sardars in reply to his previous communications on the subject. They had written to him on the 19 April 1785,

It is certainly not for the interest either of the Company or the Vizier's Government that the Chiefs of the Seik tribe should form any friendly connection with the Mahrattas. On the contrary a disunion between them is much to be desired, and if any assurance to the Seiks of our determination not to interfere in such disputes could foment or add to them, such assurances ought to be conveyed. (*For Dept. Secret Consult*, 19 April 1785)

Sir John Cumming could now clearly see that the Sikhs had lost their faith in the earnestness of Sindhia's alliance with them and if there was anything that could keep the two together, it was the fear in the minds of the Sikhs that 'in case of their disagreement with him, the English would join with him against them'. If he could remove this fear, even without committing the Company to an alliance with the Sikhs, the object of keeping the two in disunion and hostility towards one another could be easily gained. He, therefore, wrote to the Hon'ble John Macpherson, the Governor-General, on the 9 May 1785,

The bad tendency of this is so obvious and striking that, though I shall not write to the (Sikh) Chiefs, I shall, in conformity with your ideas, give them privately the strongest assurances that under no circumstances shall we take any part against them, provided they on their part will abstain from depredations on the Vizier's provinces. I shall adopt the same private mode of encouraging an opinion, which they already entertain, that the success of the Mahratta schemes on this side of India may eventually prove that fatal to their power and independence. (*For Dept. Secret Consult*, 26 May 1785)

In their letter of 26 May 1785, from Fort William, the Governor-General and Council wrote to Colonel Cumming: 'We approve of

the assurances that you propose to convey to the Seik Chiefs of our determination not to take part against them in the event of a rupture between them and Mahajee Sindia.'

Two more letters from the Sikh Chiefs on the subject of these negotiations, one from Sardars Gurdit Singh and Mohar Singh and another from Sardars Bhanga Singh, Gurdit Singh (Gur), Boksh Singh and Jodh Singh were received by Sir John Cumming and forwarded to the Governor-General and the members of the Supreme Council on 14 May 1785. But as there was no fresh cause for a change in the Company's policy, nothing further than the usual assurance from Colonel Sir John Cumming was advanced to the Sikhs.

Thus the treaties of Madhaji Sindhia with the Sikhs and the proposed alliance of the Sikhs with the East India Company in 1785 fell through and did not come to fruition.

Notes

¹ *Intelligence of the Seik Army, 4th Rabiul-awwal 1199, Major James Browne to Warren Hastings, 22 January 1785.*

Raja Jagannath, the *Amil of Rohelkhand*, 'affirmed to me', wrote Sir John Cumming to the Hon'ble John Macpherson from Anupshahr on 27 February 1785, 'that Moraudabad has not been touched and that the depredations were confined solely to the towns of Chandaucey and Sumbul. He acknowledged that the bazaars of these two places were pillaged and burnt and that a considerable number of bullocks loaded with plunder found there had been carried across the river' (*Secret Consult*, 22 March 1785).

² This assurance of Colonel Cumming to the Marathas was not considered politic by Major General C. Hibbert, the commander-in-chief, who thus expressed his opinion to the Governor-General and the members of the Supreme Council, Secret Department, in his letter of the 4 April 1785: 'With respect to the assurance of the amity of this Government given by Colonel Cumming and his offers of cooperating with him to expel the Seiks, I suppose he must have some authority for judging that they will be agreeable to the intentions of the Board. I shall only observe that however prudent it may be to preserve the friendship of Scindia, it will not, I think, be politic, to assist him against the other powers to the westward, for the more he is involved in troubles with them, the more will his present schemes of dominion be retarded, and the less leisure will he have to mediate hostile designs against the Vizier. And it may be apprehended that should he acquire universal power over the countries held in the name of the King towards which he is advancing hasty strides, his ambition may lead him to pursue further schemes of conquest. At least he will become, if not actually a troublesome and dangerous enemy, a neighbour whose designs must always be suspected and guarded against.'

The Board agreed with the commander-in-chief and warned Sir John Cumming against giving effect to his assurance to the Marathas in their letter, dated Fort William 9 April 1785. 'We have very maturely considered the subject of these letters and think it necessary to restrain you from giving to the offer which you have made to Scindia until you shall have received our sanction and authority for that purpose. We do not wish to interfere in Scindia's disputes with other powers to the westward. We are not sure that it would not be most politic to allow them their fullest operation.'

³ The first intelligence of Sindia's negotiations for an engagement with the Sikhs, for active assistance with troops, whenever he may require them, for a certain subsidy, was received by Major James Browne on 6 March and he transmitted it to the Hon'ble John Macpherson on 8 March in his letter from Agra (*Secret Consult*, 5 April 1785).